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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/PASCUAL;
JOINT STAFF FOR LTGEN SELVA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN RECONCILIATION: FATAH NEGOTIATORS
PESSIMISTIC AS HAMAS DIGS IN

REF: A. JERUSALEM 465
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 476
[1](#)C. JERUSALEM 528

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Palestinian reconciliation talks are set to resume April 1-2 in Cairo. In public statements, HAMAS officials have hardened their position against accepting prior PLO agreements and Quartet principles, specifically regarding recognition of Israel. In addition, Hamas is demanding that it be able to select the next Prime Minister, who would be based in Gaza. Senior Fatah officials voiced skepticism about the prospects for an agreement. END SUMMARY.

TALKS TO RESUME

[1](#)2. (U) Palestinian reconciliation talks are set to resume in Cairo on April 1 between senior Fatah and Hamas negotiators with Egyptian oversight/participation. On April 2, other factions will also be invited to join.

FATAH NEGOTIATORS PESSIMISTIC

[1](#)3. (C) Senior Fatah negotiator Azzam Al Ahmad was skeptical in comments to POLOFF on March 26 that the talks will lead to an agreement. He cited wide differences on government program and composition, election modalities, and reorganization of the security forces as most problematic. Al Ahmad said Hamas's refusal to accept prior PLO agreements is a core issue of disagreement and Hamas negotiators have shown little flexibility. Al Ahmad complimented the role of Egyptian mediators and said he thought Hamas's Gaza-based delegates were more amenable to compromise than those from Damascus.

[1](#)4. (C) In a separate March 26 meeting with POLOFF, senior Fatah negotiator Ahmad Abdel Rahman suggested pressure from Egypt on "the Arabs" would be necessary to move Hamas's positions. He said, however, that he anticipates some symbolic concessions when talks resume.

HAMAS HARDENS STANCE

[1](#)5. (C) After Egyptian Deputy Intelligence Chief Omar al Qinaawi briefed Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Meshal on the status of Palestinian reconciliation efforts, Hamas's deputy Syrian representative, Ali Barakeh, said publicly on March 29 that Hamas will not recognize Israel, hence Hamas cannot agree to a government program that accepts PLO commitments or Quartet principles.

16. (C) Barakeh asserted that Hamas, as the largest faction in the PLC, should select the next PM. He said further that the next PM will not be Salam Fayyad and must be based in Gaza in order to avoid a monopoly of power in the West Bank. Hamas PLC member Salah al Bardawil said publicly on March 29 that Hamas will not accept the PLO's prior commitments, as that would harm the Palestinian cause. He said it was "impossible" for Hamas to accept the Oslo Accords.

WALLES